



The *Pulpit Exchange*

It pleased God by the foolishness of preaching to save them that believe (1 Corinthians 1:21). So they read in the book in the law of God distinctly, and gave the sense, and caused them to understand the reading (Nehemiah 8:8). Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend (Proverbs 27:17).

Volume 10, No. 7

Issue # 1007

Meditation on the Ordinance of Baptism

It is certainly good for us to take time from our busy schedules and prepare for the Communion service. We are glad we can spend time in the Word again. I thought especially of that today as I was meditating. It is certainly a pleasure and a privilege to look into the Word and gain inspiration. I came across a quote recently which said, "The Bible is the only Book whose Author is always present when it is read." You cannot say

that of any other book. That is certainly true at a worship service. That is true in one's private devotions or wherever. The Author is present when it is read. We trust God's presence is here with us. We know it is.

Beginning with our baptismal service and the communion service Sunday morning, we have the convergence of six of the seven ordinances of the Church. I do not know if you ever thought about that in that

IN THIS ISSUE

Devotional

Meditation on the Ordinance of Baptism 173

Ministry

Maintaining A Principle Oriented Practice 177

Book Reprint

A Talk With Church Members 191

Youth Book Reprint

Judith 194

way — the water baptism we will be observing and participating in for one example. That does not always happen at our preparatory service — perhaps once a year. The holy kiss will be engaged in — the Christian salutation at this service and Sunday morning. There is Communion Sunday morning and feet washing. The Christian women's veiling is here and it will be Sunday morning. The ordinance of marriage (we will not have any weddings but)

what the weddings produce is certainly evident here and will be Sunday morning, including the family life and the homes that are represented here.

The preparatory and communion services are unique in that way. This evening also includes water baptism. Why do we need the ordinances anyway? There are seven of them. Do we not have the Word? Do we not have the Holy Spirit and the brotherhood? Why do we need

Vol. 10 No. 7, Issue # 1007. The Pulpit Exchange is a compilation of written sermons without commentary, published as often as possible, in the interests of promoting sound preaching in our conservative Anabaptist churches. All sermons have been transcribed and printed with permission. Names are removed so that we can focus on the message and content rather than on a certain speaker or style. (Names will be published in the next issue).

Messages have been selected on the basis of topic rather than the speaker. Messages have been selected from congregations or speakers within the Berea Amish Mennonite Fellowship, Conservative Mennonite Church of Ontario, Conservative Mennonite Churches of York and Adams Counties, PA., Eastern Pennsylvania Mennonite Church, Mennonite Christian Fellowship, Nationwide Fellowship Churches, Ohio Wisler Mennonite, Washington-Franklin Mennonite Conference, and certain selected unaffiliated Amish Mennonite congregations.

We welcome submission of recorded sermons, topics, school meetings, writer's meetings, and special conferences by ministry and laity (where recording is permitted) provided permission has been obtained by the speaker for the recording. Submissions must have a title, the name of the speaker and the congregation responsible for recording (date would be helpful).

Published by Door of Peace Publications/Les Éditions «Porte-de-Paix» a conservative Amish Mennonite/Anabaptist publisher
c/o Keith G. White, P.O. Box 104, Blyth, Ontario Canada N0M 1H0

Cost per Issue \$4.95 + \$2.50 p& h Canada/ \$3.50 p& h USA

the ordinances? Someone said it this way “Even the New Testament Christian never gets so spiritual that he does not need to be reminded of his standing and direction in life by outward signs or symbols.” God certainly knew that, and if we are honest with ourselves we know that too. When you stop to consider, all of the New Testament ordinances are signs designed by God, not man, not the Church, nor the Mennonite church, but by God. They are signs designed by God to remind the Christian of our dependence on Christ and our relation to one another. Both of those aspects are in the ordinances.

I would like to spend a few minutes on the ordinance of water baptism. Why do we observe baptism, water baptism we call it? Did you ever have that question put to you? Why do you baptize? Turn with me to Mark 16:16. There is very good reason why we observe water baptism. Namely this: it is commanded by our Lord, by Christ. I want to look at a few verses here in Mark 16:16. Some Bibles have red letters here. That means Christ is speaking. These are Christ’s words. Maybe we should start in Mark 16:15 to get the context. “And he said unto them, Go ye into all the world,

and preach the gospel to every creature. (16) He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned.” Christ puts the two together. “He that believeth and is baptized.” Notice the order. He believes and then is baptized, not baptized and then believes. We want to comment on that a bit more.

Matthew 28:19, 20 gives the same incident in a different Gospel. Again, “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.” We have a bit more added there. That is where we get our method of baptizing in the name of the Father, and the Son and the Holy Ghost.

Turn with me now to 1 Peter 3:21 for a bit more light on water baptism. Water baptism is an outward sign of a previous inward cleansing, or baptism of the Holy Spirit. That has already taken place — the previous inner cleansing the baptism of the Holy Spirit. “The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us.” That sounds like it is contradicting what I just said. Let us read on. “(Not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” There it is clar-

ified. It is an outward sign of a previous inward cleansing. The water does not save us or cleanse us. Some people are mixed up on that point. The water does not save us or cleanse us. Water baptism is the response of a good conscience and not the cause of a good conscience. Let us keep that in mind. A person does not go down on his knees a sinner and come up a saint as some people teach. That is not a Biblical concept. Water baptism is a result of regeneration, never the cause.

Now, Satan (and here is where it affects all of us again) would like to have us believe that water baptism in itself saves us. Even us who have been baptized many years ago, Satan would like us to believe that water baptism in itself saves us. It does not matter so much what we do or think after that as long as we were baptized. That saves us. The new birth, the remission of sins are a gift of Jesus Christ to the penitent, never a product of water. I am not trying to minimize water baptism. I am concerned that we who have been baptized do not rest in the fact that we have been baptized and are communing members of the church. That is what preparatory service is for. Again, I look into my own life to see if my experience is up-to-

date. We cannot “rest on our laurels,” sometimes we say. We can think back, “Well, I was baptized.” Or, “I am still a member of the church.” Finally, we must go deeper than that. It is not that those things are not necessary.

Those things of the ordinances will never take the place of an up-to-date relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. Counsel and preparatory services help to keep us thinking right on these issues. We want to continue thinking right. It is not that I think we are thinking wrong, but we want to keep thinking right.

I would like to read out of the instruction booklet under the chapter *Water Baptism*. There are seven conditions in our instruction booklet that the applicant must meet before being considered ready for baptism. 1) The applicant must have a consciousness of personal sin. 2) The applicant must have a penitent spirit. 3) The applicant must embrace and practice the doctrine of separation from the world. 4) The applicant must gladly receive instruction from the Word of God. 5) The applicant must see the need for submission to group fellowship and conscience. 6) The applicant must express a willingness to share in the Christian ordinances. 7) The applicant must be express-

ing the fruit of the Spirit.

As I read over them again, I thought of my own life. How is it with me? It is good for all us to review that little test. How do we measure up to those seven points? Our Anabaptists forefathers paid dearly for forsaking their former church (in that case Catholic church) which had a superstitious view of the ordinances. We were already talking about that. The Catholics felt the sacraments were something magical or there was something mystical about them that made them holy. Let us not fall back again into that bondage. There is nothing mystical about baptism, communion, or any of the ordinances. In themselves there is no saving merit. Yet, we realize that to be at peace with God we must partake of the ordinances with a sanctified heart.

It is not my intention to unsettle anyone. That should not be. Rather, it is a very serious step again to go through the communion service, thinking especially of communion. Turn with me to 1 Corinthians 11:27–30 yet. I could read it, but I would like you to turn to it. After all if

there is no chance of me falling, if there is no chance of me getting away from where I once was then we would not need preparatory service and communion perhaps. I would again bring these verses to our remembrance. “Wherefore whosoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthily, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. (28) But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. (29) For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. (30) For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.”

I am not giving that as from me, to you. I am simply giving the words of the apostle here for our edification. It is serious to go through a communion service. I trust that all of us will examine our own selves again, make sure that there is nothing there that would keep us, or that we would drink damnation to ourselves. May God add His blessing to the further service.

Maintaining a Principle Oriented Practice

For a message, I would invite you to Luke 10 and look at a very familiar account here. The title I

have given to the message is *Maintaining a Principle Oriented Practice*. We would

like to draw a few thoughts from this passage here, and then I will move on to expand on that thought of maintaining a principle oriented practice.

What do we mean by that? I will define that a little bit. Maybe you have been asked a question already by someone as you moved about, “Why do you live as you do? What do you represent?” In struggling to answer that question maybe you responded something like this “We believe in living according to the Bible, according to the Scriptures. We are Christians and we believe we are to live according to the Word of God.” That is what we have in mind as we think of the principle oriented practice.

We want to continue to understand what it means to live by the Scriptures. We are individuals who purpose to live out the principles of the Scriptures. It is our interest that we would continue to do so and that as we face the challenges of life that we would continue to apply Bible principles of the areas and tests and challenges that we face today. Our practices need to continue to be based on the Scriptures.

It is my firm conviction and belief that it is also the best way to perpetuate a life of faithfulness

in the rising generations as we hold forth the principles of the Word and endeavour to have them be the guiding force of our life and a way of life — what we do.

A principle then is “a basic truth or law, or a standard, a tenet, something foundational upon which other things are built.” It is a basic truth or law. A practice then is what we do, or perform, or the working out of something. It has the thought also of doing something customarily, or even habitually. It is the things that we do in a regular sense. That is a practice. What does the word *orient* mean as we think of an oriented practice? When we orient something, it means “to align, or position something with something else.” We might think of it in relation to a compass or in relation to finding our direction. Where we use it to determine our position perhaps in relation to the direction that we need to go. We orient ourselves and we position ourselves so that we can find our way.

In summary, as we think of this title, *Maintaining a Principle Oriented Practice* we would say that it is maintaining a way of life that is determined and guided by the principles of the Scripture. It is a little bit like Deuteronomy 6.

It talks about the Law of the Lord. The Lord says there that “they shall be as frontlets between thine eyes” (Deuteronomy 6:8). It is to be a way of guiding and directing them in life. God’s Word and God’s Law will do that for us.

Some examples in the Scriptures of those who have allowed principle to direct them in their life’s experience. I thought of Daniel as he was taken to Babylon under king Nebuchadnezzar. He had a foundation, a framework of life that enabled him to remain faithful even though he was in a foreign land and away from many things that he was familiar with. An example was his refusal to eat of “the portion of the king’s meat” (Daniel 1:8) and things that were defiling. He was able to refuse that because of the principles that he had been taught as a youth.

His prayer life and his way of worshipping God were also that which was formed by principle and that which he maintained even in a foreign land. Therefore, he allowed the principles that were established in his life as a youth to continue to guide him from there away. The Hebrew children, his companions as well, and their refusal to worship other gods was also an evidence of allowing principle to

direct them.

We could ask the question, “*What other alternatives could we have as we think of a principle oriented practice?*” There are also obviously some other avenues that we could allow to influence us instead of principle. We could decide issues on what the prevailing thought or what the majority does around us as we consider how we relate to things and the decisions that we make. We simply make a decision based on what others are doing, or what the majority seems to be doing. Or, we could allow the situation to determine what we do. There are many examples in the Scriptures we could look at where individuals allowed the situation they were in to determine their actions and their practice.

While some of these are not necessarily habitual practices, I thought of Abraham in Genesis 20 when he went down to Gerar, he became fearful for his life. He started using human reasoning. Instead of allowing principle to direct, he felt that he needed to use his own resourcefulness. He used some human reasoning and he was not truthful. We understand from the story how that brought him into trouble. Much better it is when we allow principle to direct us rather than our

human reason which we think the situation may dictate.

I would like to look at the message in two parts. I would like to consider I) *The foundation for a principle oriented practice*. As we consider a foundation we could think of a building, We know that effort is required and attention needed if we will maintain a building. However, a building without a foundation is finally futile and useless to maintain the exterior and the upper part of the building unless we have a good foundation. Therefore, I would like to spend some time here considering some points as we consider the foundation for a principle oriented practice.

I want to read the account in Luke 10:25–37 here in Luke 10. We will be drawing some thoughts from this. This is the account of the Good Samaritan. You will recall the story. It is familiar to us. I want to take the time here to read that because we will be drawing a few thoughts from here.

“And, behold, a certain lawyer stood up, and tempted him, saying, Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? (26) He said unto him, What is written in the law? how readest thou? (27) And he answering said, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God

with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbour as thyself. (28) And he said unto him, Thou hast answered right: this do, and thou shalt live. (29) But he, willing to justify himself, said unto Jesus, And who is my neighbour? (30) And Jesus answering said, A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, which stripped him of his raiment, and wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead. (31) And by chance there came down a certain priest that way: and when he saw him, he passed by on the other side. (32) And likewise a Levite, when he was at the place, came and looked on him, and passed by on the other side. (33) But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was: and when he saw him, he had compassion on him, (34) And went to him, and bound up his wounds, pouring in oil and wine, and set him on his own beast, and brought him to an inn, and took care of him. (35) And on the morrow when he departed, he took out two pence, and gave them to the host, and said unto him, Take care of him; and whatsoever thou spendest more, when I come again, I will repay thee. (36) Which now of these three, thinkest thou, was neighbour

unto him that fell among the thieves? (37) And he said, He that shewed mercy on him. Then said Jesus unto him, Go, and do thou likewise.”

There are some truths in this account which we would like to focus on a bit. 1) First of all, *as we think of the foundation for a principle oriented practice it is placing a premium on Scriptural knowledge and understanding.* Jesus’ answer to this question that the lawyer presented to Him was “What is written in the law? how readest thou” (verse 26)? He referred him back to the Law of God. Therefore, it is that basis I am using to draw this point that the Scriptures must be the basis, the foundation, for a principle oriented practice, and our knowing of the Scriptures and our understanding of the Scriptures.

Jesus’ challenge here to the lawyer was “What is written in the law?” The lawyers were those who studied and wrote the law. They were often those who were called in to interpret the law to others. Therefore, Jesus was certainly fair in putting that challenge back to him, “What is written in the law? how readest thou?” It underscores and illustrates the importance of knowing and understanding the Scriptures. It is as we know and understand the Scriptures that we are able to

identify the principles.

We identify the principles through study of the Scriptures, through “rightly dividing” the Scriptures. Paul tells Timothy to “Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15). Rightly dividing the Word of truth is not separating Scripture from Scripture. Rather, it is teaching and handling it accurately. That is the thought. It requires study. It requires understanding the context, the setting, as well as the tenor of the Scripture. All that is involved so we come comparing Scripture with Scripture, and so that we come to an accurate interpretation of the Scripture.

That is foundational as we think of a principle oriented practice. Our principles must be arrived at through a careful study of the Scriptures. We must study before we can effectively apply.

2) *We should view Scriptural principles as timeless.* What I mean by that is we must be convinced that the Scriptures apply to our day, our time, and our age. I would underscore this fact here that the Scriptures here, the Law, touched a very current issue. We have coming into focus the animosity between the Jews and the Samaritans. It is evident in the

Scriptures that those feelings were there.

Yet, Jesus was calling the Scriptures as an answer to decide the practice, and using this account that He gave to illustrate how principle was able to cause this Samaritan to rise above the feelings and do what the Law required — to love his neighbour as himself. It is understandable that the Samaritans felt that animosity. There was animosity between the Jews and the Samaritans. That is illustrated as Jesus talked with the woman at the well in John 4:9. She said, “How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria? for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans.” That feeling was there. Jesus used this story to illustrate how principle needs to help us overcome those feelings that might be present as this Samaritan overcame the feelings here and allowed the principle of love for his neighbour to help him go beyond all that and to express a helping hand to his neighbour who was in need.

We take the command that Jesus gives in the Gospels to “Love your enemies . . . do good to them that hate you” (Matthew 5:44; see also Luke 6:27). In Jesus’ day that could have applied to the Romans. The

Romans were hated for how they came into Israel there and they were in control. They were despised as well. We could apply it maybe to a present disrespectful neighbour. Or, maybe we could think of the Muslim people who so intensely hate those of the Western cultures and see them as an evil. Nevertheless, we must allow and see the Scriptural principles as timeless and speaking to our very day, time and the very issues that we face.

We could think of the principle of obedience to authority, civil authority as Paul teaches there in Romans 13. Again, that was written during the time when Nero was in power, and he was a very corrupt and ruthless ruler. We live in a socialistic society where the government and countries, society about us is taking a course away from Scriptural principle. Therefore, we again are called to respect those in authority, those who are over us even in times like that. The principles of the Word apply in every age, culture, and place. They are always relevant.

3) *We must acknowledge the high value of Scriptural principles.* We are more likely to maintain something that we consider to be valuable. We could think of a new home, a new vehicle, or a

new piece of machinery we have. We are very careful to maintain that because we sense its value. We consider the high value of Scriptural principles and how they portray and guide us to a life of fulfilment. It helps us in maintaining that.

We could think of Jesus' teaching here in the parable of the Good Samaritan. A life was saved — this person who was injured. He could have been a father, a husband. Something of value came out of that. This Samaritan did the right thing by getting involved and allowing the principles of the Scripture, the Law, to direct him in his relationship to this person and his need.

As we consider the high value of Scriptural principles and how they help us to really find fulfilment in life, we could think of the practical teaching that Jesus gives in relation to marriage in the New Testament. He reinforced again the original purpose of the Creator in establishing marriage as one man and one woman in an exclusive relationship for life. That is the Scriptural principle. Therefore, we recognize the value of that. When we consider the alternative, we consider the broken homes about us and the effects that has upon society and upon children. We take that principle

and we see it as valuable. Therefore, it guides us then in establishing social reserve as we relate to one another. It guides us as we establish and build solid relationships in our homes, in our marriages because we sense that it is valuable for us.

God has established these principles to equip us for a life of fulfilment and meaning. God knows what we need. It is like Paul who wrote to Timothy saying that through the Scriptures he is able to be “thoroughly furnished unto all good works” (2 Timothy 3:17). That is terminology that is used like outfitting a vessel or ship for a voyage. The principles in the Scripture are valuable in the sense that they direct us to a life of meaning and fulfilment.

4) *Further, as we think of the foundation for a principle oriented practice, along with all of this knowledge and knowing, there must be a commitment to obey.* Jesus in the conclusion to this story, His challenge to the lawyer was “this do, and thou shalt live” (Luke 10:28). Finally, that which we have learned, that which we know, that in which we are instructed must be put into practice. To not do so is very destructive to us. The Scriptures are very clear on that. Jesus says, “Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into

the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven” (Matthew 7:21). James writing in James 1:22 reveals that if we are hearers only and not doers then we deceive our own selves. Therefore, it becomes imperative that we must be doing.

We have a desire to do. It is created within us as we are created new creatures in Christ. We have a desire to obey the Word of God. When individuals are brought to a new birth experience, and they surrender themselves to the Lordship of Jesus Christ, then it is produced and created within them a desire to obey and to do the known will of God. As we ourselves have experienced the new birth and have given ourselves to the Lordship of Jesus Christ we desire to obey His Word. As we bring our youth and our young people to a new birth experience, it lays the platform and the ground work for a life of faithfulness and a life of obedience to the Word of God.

Finally, we really cannot argue against the Scriptures. If we have experienced the surrender of ourselves to the Lord then there is a desire from within to obey His Word and to obey His directives in the Word for us.

5) *Another foundational aspect is a healthy respect for*

church authority, standards, and group positions. The Scriptures are clear from Matthew 16:18 where Jesus, talking to Peter, says, “Thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.” Then, He follows through in Matthew 18:18–20 there and He says, “Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (19) Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. (20) For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.”

We know that the Scriptures are given to us in principle form. It is in that way that they are able to be always relevant because the principles do not change. We are able to take those principles and apply them then to the changing scenes of time. As from the time, the hundreds of years ago the Scriptures were written, we can now take those same principles. They are ever relevant. We can apply those principles to the many situations which we face.

Since the Scriptures are

given in principle form, it means that there needs to be an applying of those principles in a practical way. God has given the Church the authority to together arrive at a practice that is consistent with Scriptural principles. We need to sense the tremendous value that there is and have a respect for church authority and church standards and group positions. Sometimes the thought is raised that “We ought to simply live by the Scriptures,” and “Why do we need the discipline? Why do we need other rules or guidelines?” However, we have this clear teaching in the Scriptures and other places as well. We could look at examples where this was practically worked out in Acts 15. The Church together arrived at a course that was group chosen based on consultation together and through the direction of the Holy Spirit. They were able to give direction to current issues and how the gentiles should relate to the Law.

We need to recognize the value that is here and see that church standards and church rules do not militate against the Scriptures. Rather, as they are based upon the principles of the Scriptures, they do not rival the Scriptures but help us honour and fulfill them more clearly. It is true that there is probably more

than one application and there is not only one right application. However, as we think of our particular church group, we do rejoice in the many safeguards that are provided here for us. A group chosen position is certainly a safer one.

There are many benefits to a group chosen position. It gives us stability as individuals as we relate to a group chosen position. It helps us avoid extremes. It helps us avoid experimentation. I did want to say too that we say in our statement of doctrine that the “Scriptures are the only infallible rule of faith and practice.” The guidelines, the standards that we have as a people, as a church, are only safe as they are built on the principles of Scripture (and we believe that they are). Nevertheless, we must understand that the Scriptures are the final authority, and they are the only infallible rule of faith and practice — the only infallible one. However, men may sometimes have some weaknesses and limitations. They are fallible, but God’s Word forever stands. That is finally the basis.

II) *Some helps to maintain a principle oriented practice.* What we were looking at here earlier was the foundation. We considered the place of the Scriptures. Now, we are looking

at a few truths as we think of helps to maintain a principle oriented practice.

1) *It requires a regular exposure to the Word of God.* We noticed that it is through the Scriptures that principles are determined and it is through those principles that we make applications. Therefore, even in our personal Bible reading we should always be opening our lives and exposing our lives to the Word. What is God saying to us? What is He saying to me? Is there something in my life that the Spirit is speaking to us and helping us understand that we need to do things a bit differently, or what we are doing here is not according to the Scriptures?

What about in our homes? Deuteronomy 6 again, “When thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way” (Deuteronomy 6:7). We must be teaching and instructing our children through the course of life and through family worship. We need to be able to explain why we do. We explain to our children and give answers to our youth. We could think of the teaching in church services.

We can think of our Sunday School lessons. We have the lesson text and then we have a section called *Principles and Applications*. It is a way in

which we draw directly from the Scriptures the Scripture text, the principle is there, and then it is expanded into the applications. That was done this morning again, and Sunday after Sunday it is a way of coming and exposing ourselves to the principles of the Word of God and making them applicable to our day.

The upper level Sunday School lessons are rewritten. It is not that we use the same ones year after year. One of the reasons for that is so that in our applications of the principles we can stay current to current issues. Therefore, this regular exposure to the Word is what is necessary in helping maintain a principle oriented practice. We need to continue to preach and teach from the Word, identify the principles of the Scriptures and make application. In our messages we try and do that. We look at the Scriptures. We draw some principles and then we make application.

I thought of our Winter Bible School messages. There is one in particular on *Maintaining Conviction For Nonconformity in Attire*, where the brother at the beginning of the message listed about five or six Scriptural principles as it related to that subject. Then, he continued on to make application as it related to non-

conformity. He looked at the Scriptures that called us to modesty, simplicity, gender distinction, having distinctive dress, and uniformity in dress. Those were Scriptural principles that he used as a foundation for what he then shared by way of practical application.

2) *It is a help for us to have respect for practices that have served well in the past.* We could think of the observance of the Lord's day. We have some principles in the Scriptures. We can observe this from Jesus in His observance of the sabbath day. The day in rest principle is what is in focus. His regular custom was on the sabbath day to go into the synagogue to engage in worship. He also used it as an opportunity to serve others. He healed on the sabbath day.

Therefore, from these examples and these principles of Scripture we have the statement in our discipline, our statement of doctrine. It says "The Lord's day shall be well observed among us and shall be made a day of devotion and worship. Church services and Sunday schools shall be regularly attended." Then, it moves on and discusses things like avoiding feasting, pleasure seeking, labour and business on the Lord's day as much as possible. These applications are

drawn from the principles of the Scripture as it relates to the Scriptures calling us to make the Lord's day a day of rest and worship, while allowing for times of service for those who need emergency help and those who are in need.

We could think of our practice of our plain and separated dress. We recognize that there is no salvation in that. It does not earn us salvation. Nevertheless, we also recognize that our plain and separated way of dress does help us do right in other areas and has been a safeguard for us. For example, as you drove down the highways in your plain attire, have you ever resisted the idea to speed or disobey the traffic laws because of the way you appeared? It is in those areas that our separate way of dress can be a help to us and help us in other areas.

Sometimes groups with a strong traditional base are accused of allowing a tradition to be their deciding factor and to be the final authority. It is helpful to understand that there is a good place for tradition and a place of value that good traditions fill — traditions that have been based on the Scriptures. The Pharisees were condemned because they used their traditions and the commandments of men to avoid

doing the Law. However, when the traditions that we have as a group help us in fulfilling the Scriptures they become complementary to the Scriptures rather than militating against them. Therefore, it is valuable as we consider this that we do hold a respect for practices that have served us well in the past.

3) *We should strive to be consistent in all areas of life.* This a big task. I am hesitant sometimes to even speak of being consistent because as individuals we do tend to have blind spots and have areas that even in our own lives we are not as consistent as we should be. Nevertheless, our goal should be to apply Bible principles to every area of life and to all age groups, to be well-rounded in the expression of Bible principle.

Again, we do benefit from our church brethren as individuals may point out to us areas where we are not as consistent as we should be. May we always be open to that help.

4) *We purpose to honour principle over expediency.* If we will maintain a principle oriented practice then we will need to allow the principle to be the directing and guiding force for our life. We must not allow that which is the easiest way or the most economical way to be the

sole deciding factor. Think about the Good Samaritan. I am sure that he had other plans. He was going somewhere. He possibly had an appointment to meet. It could have been dangerous for him to stop and help. It cost him some money. Again, those were not deciding factors. It was the principle here.

The principle was that here was a man in need. If he was to love his neighbour as himself it required him to stop and help. Therefore, that becomes the guiding force in his life. Likewise, we must allow principle to dictate what we do and principle to guide us in our decisions. We do not merely look at what is economical or that which is the easiest way. It is for these reasons and others that we reject government handouts and subsidies as it relates to our schools as it relates to medical help, government subsidies as it relates to agriculture, and so on, because it brings us under obligation to them.

Those are examples of principles that are violated. Even though it is not economical, we think of funding our own schools. We do help to fund the public schools through our paying our taxes, but we also fund our own. We do so because there is a principle that is guiding us in

that.

5) *We must live out the principles behind the practice.* We could think of the various practices that we have as a group. I thought of several. We could think of the ordinances, for example. We have communion and footwashing. Think about footwashing. It symbolizes that we serve one another in humility. It signifies the love, humility, and equality that must be evident within the brotherhood.

Brotherhood assistance — are we living the principle out? There are two ways in which we can lose this principle. We can either fail to live out what it signifies or we can fail to simply practice it literally. We must be convinced that we want to continue to practice it literally. Nevertheless, there is also a challenge to us that if we fail to live out what it signifies we run the danger of losing the principle as well too.

The same could apply to many other principles and practices such as the holy kiss. If we do not live out the principle in practical everyday life of showing genuine love for our brethren then we are in danger of losing the principle.

6) *We must sense that there are eternal values at stake.* Coming back to the parable of

the Good Samaritan and the story that Jesus told, the lawyer's question to Jesus was, "What shall I do to inherit eternal life" (Luke 10:25)? Jesus answered him by what is written in the Law. The lawyer answered and then Jesus said, "this do, and thou shalt live" (verse 29). This matter of maintaining a principle oriented practice and maintaining a life that is guided and directed by principle is not a "take it or leave it" thing. There are eternal values at stake.

It is not only man's opinion but it is God's Word. We must continue to be gripped with the fact that the principles of the Scripture are here. God has given them to us. It is not a "take it or leave it" thing. Rather, we must obey. God places a premium on practical obedience — "this do, and thou shalt live."

Revelation 22:14, "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city." Therefore, it is imperative that our doing keeps up with our knowledge — what we know and how we have been instructed. We must put to practice that which we know.

In conclusion, as we think of maintaining a principle oriented practice, there are certainly rewards to that. One of the

rewards is that we can be a beacon of light for those who have lost their way. There is much apostasy in the world around us and in the society about us. Many things have been lost. Much is being lost around us today. Nevertheless, here and there, there are those who are seeking yet a life of faithfulness, a life that is to be lived according to the teachings of the Scriptures.

May we be there as those who are purposing to maintain a life that is built around obedience to the Scriptures. May we live a life that is ordered by the Scriptures so that we can, in our day, in these last days, be a bright and shining light to those about us who may be seeking the way of truth.

Let us think of the message to the church at Sardis in

Revelation. The challenge was “Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain” (Revelation 3:2). I would like to leave that challenge with us. We have a rich heritage which has been given to us. There are many things that have served us well and practices that have been over the years developed according to the principles of the Scriptures. They have helped us in our practice, in expression of the principles of the Scriptures and applying them in practical ways. I would challenge us that we would ever appreciate that which we have and the direction that comes to us from time to time. We need to welcome and see it as a call to help us more clearly and more faithfully live out the Scriptures in our everyday life. “This do, and thou shalt live.”

Scripture References

	Deuteronomy	16:15, 16	175		2 Timothy	
6:7	186				2:15	181
6:8	179			Luke	3:17	183
	Daniel	6:27	182			
		10:25	189		James	
1:8	179	10:25–37	180		1:22	184
	Matthew	10:26	181			
		10:28	183		1 Peter	
5:44	182	10:29	189		3:21	175
7:21	184					
16:18	184			Acts		Revelation
18:18–20	184	15	185		3:2	190
28:19, 20	175				22:14	189
	Mark	1 Corinthians				
		11:27–30	177			

From the Previous Issue:

A Devotional Look at Luke 15

From a devotional by the late Paul R. Weaver

Sunday, September 1, 1991

Centerville Mennonite Church

How to Maintain Separation in Dress

From a message by Isaac K. Sensenig

Sunday, August 20, 1989

Denver Mennonite Church

Book Reprint

A Talk With Church Members

Obedience

Among the first requirements of a Christian life is obedience. Faith in God implies submission to His will. Submission to His will means obedience to His word. An idea of the importance which the inspired writers place upon the grace of obedience may be had by taking a glance at

keepeth not his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”— 1 John 2:4.

“Let us hear the conclusion of the whole matter: Fear God and keep his commandments: for this is the whole duty of man.”— Ecclesiastes 12:13.

A FEW REFERENCES FROM THE BIBLE.

“To obey is better than sacrifice.” — 1 Samuel 15: 22.

“Ye are my friends if ye do whatsoever I command you.” — John 15 :14.

“If ye love me, keep my commandments.” John 14:15.

“He that knoweth to do good, and doeth it not, to him it is sin.” — James 4: 17.

“He that saith, I know him, and

OBEDIENCE, WHY ?

Time will not permit mention of all the reasons why every one should seek to be obedient to God in all things. The four reasons which seem to impress us most are the following:

1. *God demands our obedience.* This is clearly shown in the texts already quoted. When Jesus said, “If ye love me, keep my commandments,” He lovingly teaches His disciples of all ages that this is the divinely appointed

way of showing our love to God.

2. *God knows best.* Our eternal destiny is in His hands, and His wisdom and power and love are such that it is infinitely safer to trust in God than to trust in ourselves. A careful study of the Bible reveals the fact that when men set aside the wisdom of God and substitute their own wisdom instead, they invariably met with disaster. Adam and Eve allowed the serpent to still the voice of God in their ear, and by yielding to Satan's subtle allurements they brought the disgrace of sin and death upon themselves and the human family. The antediluvians forgot their God, and were swept away by the flood. Nadab and Abihu started a worship after their own notion, and were consumed with fire from heaven. King Saul ignored the command of the Lord, and lost his kingdom. The Jewish nation forsook the pure worship of God, and were scattered to the four winds of the earth. These are a few of the many instances on record which prove the folly of substituting our own wisdom for the superior wisdom of God. God knows what is best for us. We never make a mistake by accepting His leadership and following Him continually in loving obedience.

3. *Obedience to God means a*

union of the obedient. It is not necessary at this time to dwell upon the fact that a union of forces means strength, while disunion means weakness. It is written in the history of all nations; and the best authors, editors, and preachers have emphasized, heralded, and proclaimed this fact. The world will never be conquered for God until all the people of God unite under the same banner, are filled with and guided by the same Spirit, and accept the leadership of God in fact as well as in theory.

There is but one basis upon which God's people can consistently unite, and that is the basis of absolute surrender to God. God will sanctify no other union. Here is the cause of so many divisions in the church. Union in God means a union in His love, and this makes the union binding. Union upon any other basis means a union until something intervenes to sever the natural affections, when division will result. We may expect a divided church so long as there are any pretended Christians who reject any part of God's word, who would sacrifice Gospel truth for the sake of public opinion, or who refuse to surrender their will to the will of God. Let all the professed followers of Christ be soundly converted; let all of self

be buried away; let God's will be submitted to at all times; let every vestige of worldliness be driven from the mind and heart, and every heart be filled with love to God, His people, and his cause; we will be surprised how soon His all-powerful love will melt us into one strong, united, spiritually-minded organization.

4. *There are no promises in the Bible for the disobedient.* The Bible is full of precious promises; but they are all for the obedient. God makes provisions for human weakness. The doctrine of justification by faith, so clearly set forth in the word of God, must be a source of consolation to every earnest Christian whose consciousness of weakness might otherwise lead him to despair. Our Saviour lovingly assures us that "*He that heareth my word, and, believeth on him that sent me, HATH EVERLASTING LIFE.*" (John 5:24) But while God is generous with those who humbly strive to serve Him "in spirit and in truth," (John 4:23) He has not one single promise for those who reject His word. "Be not deceived; God is not mocked; for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap." (Galatians 6:7)

RESULTS OF OBEDIENCE.

Obedience to God requires of us that we hold ourselves in readiness to do whatever God wants us to do. Obedient servants often do things that their masters would rather not have done; but when they do it is through ignorance of their master's will, and when once enlightened, are willing to make matters right if they can. This expresses our relation toward our heavenly Master, if we are His obedient servants.

The first result of obedience to God is the denial of self. Our will is surrendered, and God's will is accepted in its stead. This causes a struggle. Satan is not willing to relinquish his grasp without a struggle. The desires of the flesh, which are so very dear to the carnal mind, die hard. To crucify the old man causes agony. But the grace of God is sufficient to sustain us in every trial, and the less we waver, the easier the victory over sin. Oftentimes after our conversion the "fleshpots of Egypt" (Exodus 16:3) are set so near us that we are conscious of a yearning after them; but in answer to prayer God will take away our sinful desires, and arm us with power to resist temptation. As we continue in the service of God, the power of temptation over us becomes weaker, and our conflict with sin assumes the form of a triumph rather than a

struggle.

God never takes anything away from us without substituting something much better. Being obedient to God, we follow Him wheresoever he leads us. This takes us out of a world of sin. It makes us "free from the law of sin and death," (Romans 8:2) gives us an armor by which we are enabled "to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked," (Ephesians 6:16) and makes us in the highest degree the benefactors of mankind. But the crown-

ing result of our obedience shall be realized only, when, after having crossed the river which separates time from eternity, we stand in the hallowed presence of our Maker, and hear the blissful words, "Come ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom." (Matthew 25:34)

We never lose anything by leaving the sins of earth, to become obedient to the Voice from heaven. For every one that faithfully bears the cross on earth, there is a crown in heaven.

Youth Book Reprint *(continued)*

Judith

III

SEEK AND YE SHALL FIND

The Longing of the Soul

THE SUMMER had passed, and fall had come. The days were dreary and cool. The meadows and pastures, which had been so luxuriously covered with a carpet of beautiful flowers and grass, were now lonely plains covered with dry yellow grass. The nightingale was not singing any more in the woods near the city. Only the wind was ominously speeding through the tops of the bare trees.

Judith withdrew herself often during these days from the company of the others and went to the large city park. There she wan-

dered at times for many hours among the trees watching the yellow and brown leaves that covered the ground and rustled under her feet as she walked over them. A strange pain filled her heart in these lonely hours. Where was the reason for this great, painful longing? What did the young soul crave for? Judith herself did not know an answer to these questions. She was loved by all, and she in turn loved her dear ones affectionately. What more did she want? Yet her young heart was longing in those moments for a higher love from above that never

would change nor vanish.

The wind tore the last brown leaf from a tree near by, and it fell to her feet. Judith looked at it, and tears filled her eyes. She picked it up and, pressing it to her lips, kissed the withered dry leaf. She could not explain why she felt so sorry for it. It seemed as if something near and dear to her heart had died.

“Our whole life is like the life of this faded leaf,” she Pondered. “Today we are Young — we love and are being loved — and tomorrow the cold wind of life blows over us and we fade, wither, and droop. The next gust of wind tears us loose from our branch of life, and like this leaf, we are falling to the ground and mingle with the dust. Perhaps someone’s foot will soon walk over you, too, Judith.”

She had been uttering the last thought, and she shuddered at the sound of her own voice. An awe filled her heart at such thoughts.

“You are a very queer girl,” she scolded herself.

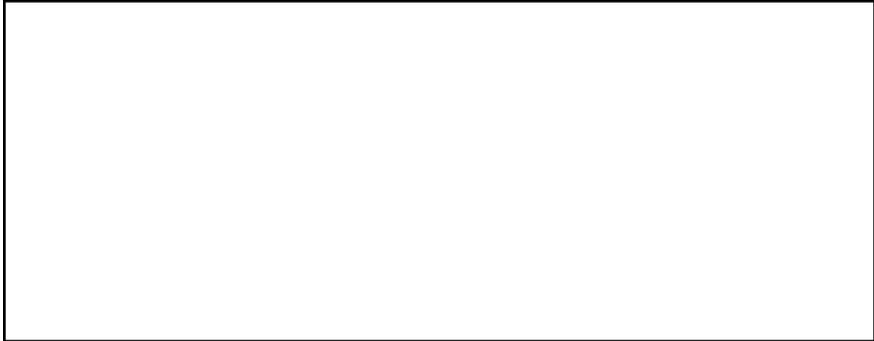
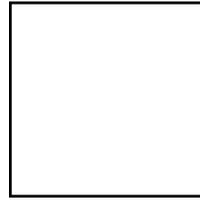
“But isn’t our whole life composed of queer and strange things? There are many unexplainable phenomena and unsolvable mysteries. I wonder how my life will end. Is it possible that it is like this leaf that falls and decays? Or is there something behind the grave? If — then what is it? Many people do believe in the immortality of the soul and a

life after death, but nobody knows anything about it — my grandfather, for example. Probably his hour has come long ago, and he has left this world already. Where is he now? He read and spoke much of God. Yet is it possible that if there is a God that He did not reveal anything about this eternal existence to men whom He created?

“Grandfather was certain that ‘Yeshua’ never rose from the dead. But I have learned since that some people think and believe firmly that He arose. They also believe that He will bring from the dead all those who believe on Him and that they will live eternally. This all is perplexing. Our world is full of puzzles. We are living as in a dream, or delirium. I wonder if the reason for the present longing in my heart is not in this mystery. Aren’t these decaying leaves telling me of this mystery in their own language which, though I cannot understand with my mind, I feel with my heart?

“Where is the solution for it all?” asked Judith, and the echo quietly repeated her question, carrying it through the trees of the park.

“How dreadful it is here at the cemetery of dead leaves,” she whispered, shivering, as she turned. She left the park and went home.



Catalogue

Sermons transcribed and available on various topics.

Volumes 1 – 9 available.

Back Issues Available

Ministry Topics

Special Meetings Available

Book Reprints are available

- 100 Lessons in Bible Study
- A Talk With Church Members
- Bible Wines: Laws of

Fermentation

- Christian Attire
- Christianity and Dress
- Christ, The Apostles and Wine
- Dress: A Brief Treatise
- The Ideal Christian Home
- The Ministry
- The Temperate Life
- Wordly Conformity in Dress

New Series:

Practical Nonconformity

Vol 1 — The Christian, Cards, Contests, Games, and Other Amusements.

Others Currently in Progress:

10 Commandments
Exposition of Colossians
Nonresistance Meetings
Writer's Meetings
Literature Evangelism
Various Fellowship Meetings
Garden City Confession of Faith

Children's book:

The Folly of Procrastination

Full Catalogue available